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14 January 1977

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Jose Ricardo RABEL Nunez (AMLEO-3) (201-249386)

1. Born 7 April 1922 in Havana, Cuba, the son of a native-born American citizen, RABEL was brought up in comfortable circumstances. He attended high school in Cuba, completed the last year in New Orleans, Louisiana, and entered Tulane University in September 1938. He enlisted in the U.S. Army in December 1940 and eventually saw combat in France, Belgium, Germany and Austria. After discharge in December 1945, RABEL returned to Cuba to attend the University of Havana and this began a life of job changes, moving back and forth between the U.S. and Cuba, and, in general, rootless living.

2. RABEL's background reads like that of a man with no allegiances or loyalties and no particular goals. Viewed in retrospect, his career presents a picture of unreliability. It is probable that RABEL's rootlessness and apparent unreliability applied both to his relations with CASTRO and to those with the Agency. It is quite possible, therefore, that he not only served the Agency in a superficial way but that he did the same for CASTRO at various times when it suited his purposes. Without postulating this sort of dual role (one which fits very well with his previous life) it is almost impossible to explain some of the reasonably good things he did for the Agency and the quite certain allegations that he was a CASTRO agent. This explanation is not fully satisfactory, but it does explain his career better than the charge

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that he was a CASTRO agent from the beginning. The question that must remain unanswered is whether he betrayed the AMTRUNK Operation. He was not arrested until September 1965 (when AMTRUNK had already run its course) but it appears quite certain that he cooperated with the DSE after his arrest and while he was in prison.

3. RABEL joined in the clandestine activities against BATISTA in March 1952, first amongst the exiles in the U.S. and then after late 1952 from inside Cuba. He joined the Cuban armed forces to further his plotting and was assigned to the Cuban General Staff. He was the Cuban liaison officer with the U.S. Army mission in Cuba from November 1954 until April 1956. During his entire period in the Cuban army, RABEL was involved with dissident Army elements; when they attempted a coup in April 1956, RABEL was arrested. He was released shortly thereafter, worked in the chicken business for a year and then returned to the U.S. and worked with one of his brothers (Luis RABEL Nunez). In October 1957 he returned to Cuba and became involved with the 26th of July Movement but had to leave a year later when he was brought to the attention of the BATISTA forces because of a bomb explosion. He smuggled weapons to Camilo Cienfuegos for about a year and then in October 1958 he joined the Cienfuegos group. Shortly after the CASTRO victory, CASTRO called upon RABEL to set up a Cuban Marine Corps, a job he held until February 1960, at which time he was appointed Chief of Viviendas Campesinas.

He held this job until he defected to the U.S. in December 1962. It is worth noting that he rarely pursued one activity in one place for more than a year at a time from 1945 to 1962.

4. RABEL gave Alfonso RODRIGUEZ the following reasons for his defection:

a. Communist pressure, hounding, and the basic enmity of the Communist Party toward him. (This appears very reasonable in view of his service in the U.S. Army and training in some aspects of intelligence, such as prisoner interrogation. In addition, his schooling in the U.S. and the reasonable economic circumstances would not have been recommendations from the Communist point of view.)

b. Strong backing by Fidel which protected him from more serious attacks from the Party. (This, too, seems entirely reasonable. His family farm was near the farm Fidel's father managed and RABEL and Fidel had known each other as children. In addition, RABEL's long involvement in the anti-BATISTA movement and with Camilo Cienfuegos were probably in his favor in CASTRO's view.)

c. An obligation to protect the non-Communists in his department, which prevented his earlier defection, and uncertainty of his reception in the U.S. (In view of the number of defections from RABEL's department, there were, in fact, people to protect. Since RABEL had served in the U.S. Army, and probably felt the U.S. was his second

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country, he could well have had questions about his reception after serving in the CASTRO government.)

d. His resentment against the confining nature of a Communist State. (Since he never stayed in one place more than a short time in his entire life, to have been restricted to Cuba must have seemed a punishment.)

5. RABEL was used to pitch [Dr. Marta FRAYDE Barraue] in [Paris] in [July] 1963, and to check out leads for the AMTRUNK Operation. One of his leads led to the recruitment of AMTRUNK-10. Later, in early 1964, RABEL was leader of the Rebel Army Group supported by the American Legion in Miami and was involved in the Rebel Army Radio program.

6. There is no specific evidence (except the accusations below) that RABEL was involved in a suspicious way with the CASTRO regime during this period, but his desire to exfiltrate his wife and children was a constant source of difficulty between him and the Station. This problem led to his eventual termination in July 1964 and to a great deal of resentment on his part. He conspired constantly, from mid-1963 until his capture in Cuba in September 1965, to get into Cuba to exfiltrate his wife and children.

7. RABEL was sentenced to 30 years imprisonment but was set free in July or August 1967, which is a strong indication that the charges that he worked for the DSE while in prison were true. Moreover, there is some indication that he may have attempted a provocation at Cuban behest immediately after his capture. There are two firm accusations that RABEL was a

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Cuban agent as early as July 1963 (which would have been when he was screening names for the AMTRUNK Operation), one from LITAMIL-9, and the other from Fernando REY reported by VASLOUCH-1. As mentioned above, these charges could well be true; yet RABEL could have fulfilled his duties for CASTRO superficially, for his own purposes, and not necessarily have compromised his work with the Agency until he was captured. The difficulties he had in exfiltrating his wife could have been, partially, punishment by CASTRO for not fulfilling his duties as an agent; otherwise, had his work in the U.S. been valuable, CASTRO could have facilitated the exfiltration of RABEL's wife so that RABEL could continue his work as an agent undisturbed.

LAD/JFK Task Force 1977/Marty Miller:rp

Copy filed: 201-249386

Attachments: 4

- A- 10 Feb 1964 Memo for the Record
- B- 6 Mar 1963 dispatch UFGA-7998 with Att.
- C- 20 Feb 1963 cable WAVE 4730 (IN 71127)
- D- 30 Sep 1963 dispatch UFGA-11375

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